



DEVELOPING AN EFFECTIVE MINISTRY TO MEN

by James McCarroll

Where is the church now?

“Today’s church does not mesmerize men; it repels them.” - David Murrow

Barna research shows that more than 90 percent of American men believe in God, and five out of six call themselves Christians. But only two out of six attend church on a given Sunday.

Too often it’s not what the leadership imposes but what the laity demands that causes the church to repel men. If your church has a large gender gap, it’s probably not the pastor’s fault.

Dr. Leon Podles describes the church as a “woman’s club with a few male officers.” In his book, “Why Men Hate Going to Church,” author David Morrow suggests that “to be truly healthy, a church must be a marble cake...Every congregation needs a generous helping of both the feminine spirit and the masculine spirit. ...A masculine concern for quality, effectiveness, and achievement pervades everything that they do. Yet they are supportive, nurturing, and tender with people.”

A Ministry that Attracts Men

The answer doesn't come by calling men back to the church. It comes when we choose to call the church back to men. We have to adjust the spiritual thermostat within our congregations. Few churches model men's values: risk and reward, accomplishment, heroic sacrifice, action and adventure. Most men turn away from the church, looking for environments where the thermostats are set to their liking. Sports, career, hobbies, outdoor recreation, wealth building, and even video games reflect men's core values. Church does not.

Most churches are full of women and older adults (50+) or men and young adults. The difference is because they have different appetites when it comes to ministry. Studies show that men and young adults tend to be challenge-oriented. Some of their fundamental values are adventure, risk, daring, independence, change, conflict, variety, pleasure, and reward. On the other hand, studies demonstrate that women and older adults tend to be security-oriented. Some of their fundamental values are safety, stability, harmony, cooperation, predictability, protection, comfort, responsibility, support, and tradition. Individuals in these groups are likelier to play it safe, seek security, and avoid risk. Men are drawn to churches that have the guts to recapture the challenge of following Jesus and not just promote the safety and security of being the church.

If a church wants to reach men, its 'bread and butter' must challenge people to follow Christ. The challenge is men's love language. The pastor must offer challenging sermons, and laypeople must foster a culture of person-to-person challenge (Hebrews 10:24).

What are the marks of a challenging church?

It casts a specific vision of greatness before the people. Ministry is constantly pushed outward into the world. Challenging churches constantly raise up leaders to foster a culture of person-to-person

challenge. It doesn't coerce people or make them feel guilty but always invites them to join the adventure. Though the teaching is direct and to the point, the teachers do not nag people or focus too much on specific sins, depending instead on the Holy Spirit to convict and correct them.

Make things too comfortable for a man, and he'll lose interest. Try to control a man, and he'll rebel. Over-confront him, and he'll resent you as a nag. But challenge him how Jesus challenged the disciples, and he will grow. A church that challenges its members is a church where men can thrive.

Men's Discipleship – “Wanted: A Band of Brothers”

Not only must the church create an environment for men to thrive. A ministry must be specifically designed to disciple men shaped around the masculine spirit. Every man longs to be part of a “band of brothers.” If the church offered this kind of fellowship—united in purpose, mutually supportive, and accomplishing great things—you would not be able to blast men out of the church.

Suggested Resources: 33: Authentic Manhood: Series 1-3

“Proper Leadership”

This formation will require a team of leaders who have a heart for ministry to men and not just special projects and/or events. These individuals must possess a passion for working with men, a desire to see male discipleship, a heart for fellowship with other men, and a sense of the importance of godly stewardship among men. Also, they must be students of men's ministry. They must be willing to invest in studying and researching what it takes to minister to men effectively.

Suggested Resources: Sleeping Giant (Luck); Effective Men's Ministry (Downer);

Why Men Hate Going to Church (Murrow)

“Creative Competence”

Though there are many resources to support men’s ministry development, we must always be sensitive to the needs of the men in the church congregation. Therefore, the leadership has to be creative enough to meet needs, and if they can’t find the resources, they can create what they need or modify what they have to meet the demand effectively. They must be willing to take creative risks to get the right “fit” of ministry that works in their context.

“The Five Principles”

Because men are uniquely designed, five principles have proven effective for healthy ministry environments that promote transparency and camaraderie amongst men:

Confidentiality

Because men are usually in environments that do not welcome their most authentic and deepest concerns and perspectives, they long for a fellowship where they can be “real” and not have to worry about being reprimanded for their feelings.

Accountability

There must be a challenge to hold one another and be held accountable. This encourages brothers to embrace the value of fellowship that enhances them but also allows them to support another brother’s enhancement.

Growth

Men must be able to participate in an environment that will have a personal impact on their lives. They must be able to own the setting as theirs and see it as a challenge to become better because they were present.

Community Impact

Men must be seen as responsible for the state of their communities. They must sense the charge to be men of impact and influence. Therefore, they are challenged to make their homes, neighborhoods, and world better because they were entrusted with the riches of the gospel.

Encouragement

Finally, men must realize that no one encourages men like other men. They must see that the space is not designed to tear down but to build one another up.

Faces of Ministry to Men

“Men of Worship”

In Exodus 34:23, Moses is commanded to bring the men before the LORD three times per year. Though having men lead worship and participate in worship is powerful, it is also great to set aside a worship service that only includes men. This will allow men to be transparent before the LORD in the company of other brothers.

“Men of Fellowship”

In Matthew 14:34, we read about the men of Gennesaret and how they gathered to bring the sick of the area to Christ. We must encourage our men to gather for the cause of Christ. Whether through retreats, special events, or projects, they must have a space where they can gather in a way that will benefit them spiritually while simultaneously building camaraderie.

“Men of Discipleship”

Paul reminds Timothy not to operate as a worker who can potentially be ashamed of how he has accomplished his task but as one who has rightly divided the word of truth (1 Tim 2:15). We must encourage men not just to hold positions but become functioning disciples of Jesus Christ. We must challenge them to know that discipleship is central to the healthy work of ministry.

Suggested Resources: *Disciplines of a Godly Man* (Hughes); *Hazards of Being a Man* (Miller); *Kingdom Man* (Evans)

As men begin to grow in the faith and operate in the local congregation in a healthy way, we will begin to see their impact on the congregation and community through the work that the LORD does through them.